

You ain't no witch! Witches are girls.

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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Warlock is a lesser-known supernatural horror movie starring then low-profile talent, Julian Sands, Richard E. Grant and Lori Singer. It underperformed at the box office and currently ranks at 53% on Rotten Tomatoes. I can see you're already enthralled. Exactly. So why would Acclaim/LJN attempt to adapt it into a video game five years after its underwhelming release? That's what's bizarre; they *didn't*. Instead, Realtime Associates/the White Team who took charge of the development work, based the surprisingly slick action-platformer on the even more obscure *sequel* subtitled 'The Armageddon'. Well, *sort of*, we'll get to that later.



Julian Sands reprised his role as the diabolical, eponymous warlock for the follow-up, while the rest of the cast wisely steered well clear.



Overcoming the threat of typecasting, he would later go on to play the ultimate goodie; Superman's father, Jor-El, in *Smallville* (2009-10). Believe it or not, the first movie isn't so horrendous it caused people to bury TVs and VCR equipment upon bathing their eyes in its unholy glow... however detached they felt from the experience.



In Armageddon, Julian rips out a psychic's peepers to be deployed as a Satanic compass. So that explains that one.

Warlock has even accrued a fair few fervent fans over the years, elevating the obscure low budget B-flick to something approaching cult status. Male witchcraft isn't a subject that's been well-trodden in Hollywood, so it *does* ply a certain alternative flavour. Cheesy as it certainly is, it's the tasty kind you lap up with relish. Pacing is perfect, carried by plenty of witty dialogue and deliciously tasteless humour. It's accessible, fun, throwaway nonsense that you're happy to pick up again and chuck in the DVD player every now and then to unwind.

If you're amongst Warlock's select group of defenders, it's unlikely you'll appreciate the direction taken by its sequel filmed in just 38 days. Cluing us into the quality of the production, it features unplanned cameos from some of the crew who push over a polystyrene boulder during the finale scene. How on earth was that not spotted in post-production? I'd imagine it *was*, and no-one cared enough to re-shoot the segment.

In Armageddon's defence, it *does* feature Zach Galligan (Billy from Gremlins). Well, for all of thirteen seconds anyway. Special effects, as in the first movie, are cheap and cheerful, and yet that is one of the sequel's few redeeming graces. It's always interesting to see how practical and CGI effects have evolved over the years; how budget impacts their believability. Even when considered incredulously risible, they can lend an affable comic book charm we embrace with affection regardless. Refer to Superman for further evidence. Christopher Reeve makes us believe a man can fly. A befitting example since the same ropey techniques are employed in Warlock. Julian levitates, supporting a lady solely by the hand, causing her to float with no consideration of gravity. Elsewhere he's seen descending invisible steps. It's *awfully* watchable.

"Fans of horror games might war to the final fight. But if you're looking for a chilling challenge, look elsewhere. Warlock the game is like Warlock the movie: a decent rental on a stormy night. But worth buying? Now that's scary."

GamePro (70%, Mega Drive, April 1995)



Concluding the original movie, the starring devil-child is vanquished by Cassandra (with a K) delivering a lethal salt-injection to his neck, causing him to spontaneously combust.





All that remains after witch-hunter, Giles Redfearne (played by Grant), caves in Julian's writhing, eviscerated skeleton is a neat pile of ash, perfectly primed for scattering should anyone be prepared to mourn his dubious loss. No matter; four years later he's reborn following an immaculate conception elicited by the impact of a lunar eclipse acting upon an ancient runestone fashioned into a family heirloom/necklace. Shot from the womb of the unfortunate owner as a repulsive alien slug, it ravenously eats her pomeranian pooch before transforming into a fully-grown human adult covered in afterbirth. Ironically, he craves his surrogate mother's affection as you might expect from any ordinary new-born infant.

Warlock: (first line of his resurrection) Won't you give your boy a kiss, Mother?



These misshaped creatures look uncannily similar to Julian during his gunk-puddle ascension

Naturally, she's nauseated by the prospect of touching this mucus-gloop-dripping monster so graciously declines his affection. Shrieking in terror as she flees to the bathroom, Julian is left in no doubt as to his acceptance as family. With nothing left to lose, he unceremoniously slaughters mummy by bursting her cranial blood vessels with his aural reverberations. Our warlock villain is of course played by the same actor, yet his character is almost a tabula rasa reset. Any groundwork laid during the first outing is cast aside, dismissing it as though emanating from an entirely unrelated movie. Well, that's certainly one way to ensure no continuity errors encroach upon the next entry in the series.



Julian is more callous and single-minded than ever. Dispensing with all redeeming, empathetic traits, his stoic one-liners are remorselessly chilling. At least they would be if they weren't so comical. Some dialogue is so bad it's good, elsewhere it's genuinely just shoddy and predictable.

Warlock: Mirror mirror on the wall, who's the scariest one of all?

Everything else that happens in the sequel that doesn't involve Julian being onscreen is tedious, hammy-acted drivel. That's what ruins it, sullyng the relatively good name of the original movie. Rehasing the plot, swapping the talismanic book for runestones shows a distinct lack of imagination, whilst the good guy double act don't have the screen presence to make us sympathize with their plight. There's just no chemistry despite them being romantically involved, in stark contrast to Redfearne and Kassandra who *aren't*.

Hammering the last nail in Warlock's footprint, exactly the same reboot situation transpired in relation to the third (and thankfully *final*) movie in the trilogy, this time a straight-to-video 'classic' dredged up from the black lagoon in 1999.

Cop: Let me give you some advice - get away from this house.

Kassandra: You got a watch?

Cop: Yeah.

Kassandra: Time me.

Warlock 1 is an odd amalgamation of Terminator, Highlander, He-Man and a dozen other action movies that emerged around the same era. It opens with the capture and thumb/toe screw incarceration of the titular warlock in Boston, Massachusetts circa 1691. In recompense for his witchcraft-orientated misdemeanours, Julian is sentenced to be executed the following day... graciously allowing him time to devise a cunning escape plan.

"A wealth of evidence has convicted thee of trafficking with the devil. Thou art to be hanged... and then burned over a basket of living cats."

Who? This mild-mannered charmer? He wouldn't harm a fly. Satan, in fact, intervenes on his behalf, opening a portal to the future.



As in Terminator, the chief nemesis embarks on a time-travelling jaunt with his potential slayer closely in tow. All ensuing events subsequently unfold in 20th century Los Angeles, California, where the rapsca lion locks horns with Redfearne who's tasked with bringing him to justice once more. Apparently the English language has changed little in the last 300 years so no translation is required. Even so, a few minor concessions are peppered throughout the script to give the impression the time-travellers have been displaced. Corny and forced as it sounds, typically reversing the order of a couple of words to alter grammatical structure with which we're more familiar.

Giles Redferne: The alter table, he broked it?

Kassandra: Yeah, he "broked" it.

Kassandra: Not a local product, are ya?

Originally the warlock was written as the good guy, persecuted and driven from his home by Redfearne for engaging in witchcraft, which I'm sure each of the accomplished male leads could handle, although it wouldn't have been nearly so devilishly macabre.

Giles Redferne: The spellbook. All witches keep grimoires, yet one is indestructible, one is the bible of black magic - the Grand Grimoire. Always witches have lusted for it, and now, here, I find a page - one lone page!

In return for his assistance in reversing Creation, Satan promises to make the warlock his second in command. To achieve this he has to recompile The Grand Grimoire. Problem is it's currently scattered across the globe having been split thrice-ways to guard against such an earth-shattering occurrence.

Warlock: How comes it that you have brought me here?

Channeler: (possessed by Zamiel) Bring together that which has been thirderd. Bring together my bible.

Warlock: The Grand Grimoire, here? Now?

Once pieced back together, the true name of God can be revealed. Recite that backwards and tada! All his hard work is undone... to whatever end. Teasingly, the text on the sacrosanct tome's cover never finishes shape-shifting so we're left to guess God's exact name. Think of the consequences of including that in the movie!



Giles Redferne: The warlock holds two parts of the book. This much he confessed. Know you what happens should he gain all three?

Kassandra: I don't want to know. I don't.

Giles Redferne: Hidden within that book is the name of God, the lost name of God.

Kassandra: The lost name of... Huh-uh, I don't wanna hear this.

Giles Redferne: 'Tis the name invoked during creation. Witches charge that should this name, this true name of

God, be uttered back to front...

Kassandra: I'm not listening.

Giles Redferne: Should this name be uttered in reverse...

Kassandra: (fingers in ears) Blah, blah, bah, blah, blah!

Giles Redferne: ...all creation will undo. 'Twill reverse.

Pastor: Can I ask what your interest is in finding such a book?

Giles Redferne: Our interest lies in stopping those who would see all good falter. It lies in stopping the powers of misrule from coming of age. It lies in finding that damned book, and thwarting a vile beast of a man who shall not rest until God himself is thrown down, and all of creation becomes Satan's black hell-besmeared farting hole!

Kassandra: You asked.

Incomprehensibly, in the Spanish dub, it's the authentic name of *Satan* that's discovered. Obviously, this makes no sense since that could easily have been imparted by the devil himself to make Julian's task a whole lot easier! Even stranger, the trailer indicates that originally Julian was to be the Satanic Messiah himself, so could have had a quiet word in his *own* ear. As it is, it's not quite so simple because Giles and Kassandra with a K (and a doll-army?) are equally determined to ensure the warlock fails for one reason or another. Aside from preventing the downfall of life as we know it, Giles is driven to avenge the murder of his wife, Marion, while Kassandra seeks to reverse the rapid-ageing

curse cast upon her. *Rapid* being the operative word; 20 years by the day doesn't give her long to live!



Warlock: (placing a hex on Cassandra) Tout, Tout, through and about; your callow life in dismay. Rentum, Osculum, Tormentum: a decade twice over a day.

To speed up production of the movie it was wisely decided that the crew wouldn't spread filming over the next forty years, even if it meant Cassandra aged more convincingly, so you may spot some heavy make-up in use. It's a bit low-budget and hokey, nevertheless, not drastically worse than the effects employed in *Back to the Future II* to transform

Jennifer. You'll likely be too wrapped up in the parallel with that plot element to even notice.

Kassandra: (upon finding herself cursed with sudden aging) Twenty f**kin' years and not one party. What a total ass burr!

A what now? What is it with Americans and asses? They'll prefix or append every conceivable word with an ass given the slightest half-assed opportunity. Weird-ass ass-handers!

Despite being approved by Lori beforehand, at the 11th hour she refused to wear prosthetics and some of the heavier makeup designed to accomplish her volte-face. What you see onscreen is therefore a diluted compromise of what was initially devised. File that one in the diva department.

Kassandra: Why couldn't he just kill me? Nothing could be worse than this!

Giles Redferne: His very thought.

Leading up to her vengeance, voodoo rituals are performed to weaken Julian's resolve. Whilst injecting further welcome black humour, as he quickly self-heals all wounds inflicted, the only benefit is to slow him down. Again, it's all a bit Arnie vs the T-1000 without the special effects budget the infamous liquid metal scenes would stipulate.

Giles Redferne: The hammer! Take it! Where you find his tracks, nail the earth deeply!

Kassandra is either very weak or the hammer is a crucial part of the ritual! We only ever see her driving it into *sand*! Of course, good ultimately triumphs over evil and everything goes back to the way it was, except Marion is still dead. Not

that it matters too much because she would be anyway 300 years into the future.

What's less predictable - or at least *would* be if I hadn't already spoiled it - is the way the warlock perishes; double-jabbed in the neck with diabetic Cassandra's insulin syringes, filled instead with salinated water, he bursts into flames and is burnt to a crisp. It turns out that witches don't like that too much. Anyway, where was daddy? We don't see the omnipotent, red horny one rushing to his rescue.

"Warlock won't set your system on fire, but despite the sometimes-frustrating controls, it's a good intermediate adventure with some truly challenging puzzles. However, Warlock is definitely no lock."

GamePro (80%, SNES, April 1995)

In terms of influencing the structure and plot of the game, very little of this is remotely relevant seeing as the 1993 sequel served as the inspiration, and that's a whole new cauldron of fish, or rather Armageddon. Basing the game on the *second* movie may have made it more current, however, already two years old by the time of the game's release it was hardly what you'd call topical. Still, it was marginally more logical than adopting the third movie as its foundation seeing as that was four years away and time-travel is the devil's work we're led to believe.

In Armageddon, again the plot is spurred by a desire to contain the Satanic threat of witchcraft by identifying and exploiting the warlock's Achilles' heel. Now this entails modern-day druids capitalising on the power of six runestones to counter the almighty power of darkness with cleansing light generated by ancient trinkets.



Before then we're introduced to the concept by way of a brief flashback to ye olden days whereby a tribe of druids are preparing to perform a ritual sacrifice to keep the warlock in check. A routine which must be performed once a millennium when certain cyclical conditions coincide, affording him the possibility of invading earth.

Ironically, a rabble of Christians who also see Satan as public enemy no. 1, gatecrash the party under the false assumption the druids are in league with the devil. Most of the hooded warblers are slaughtered, whilst their precious runestones are scattered around the globe, seriously scuppering their chances of living happily ever after. A counter-intuitive approach to tackling a common adversary I thought, but then I suppose it's the usual scenario of 'my god's better than yours, let's fight'.

Fast-forwarding to the present time, druidism is still alive and well. We're introduced to a couple of school kids and the trials and tribulations of their 'will-they?-won't-they?' relationship. Kenny is infatuated with Samantha, and she can't decide if she'd be better off with the school bully/meathead. Spoiler: they *will*, it's the law. "In the old days, warriors would make love before going off into battle". May as well then.

Stumbling blocks and family rivalry aside, they are eventually brought together by the shared knowledge that druid ancestry dictates their duty to join forces to slay the warlock. After overcoming their understandable initial hangups, Kenny and Samantha are both killed to be reborn as druid warriors, placing them in a better position to mount a formidable counterattack. In Kenny's case, the decision is forced upon him by his father, whereas Samantha stabs herself in the chest because her pop - the local priest - can't bring himself to do it.

Cue the return (?) of the warlock, Satan's emissary. It emerges that one of the wayward runestones was inherited by a lady who now wears it as a necklace.



Facilitated by the influence of a lunar eclipse, Satan is able to take possession of the unsuspecting conduit in order to resurrect his son. To channel her so to speak. Once back in business, the warlock is instructed by his father to locate the remaining runestones. These will allow him to be summoned back to earth as long as the reconnaissance mission is completed within six days. To aid him on his quest, a map is constructed using the dead flesh of the surrogate mother's stomach. It's anyone's guess how that works.

Battle thus commences between the druidised - now devoted - couple and the warlock in pursuit of the magic MacGuffins. Astoundingly he's eventually defeated by telekinetically turning on the headlights of the school bully's SUV, light being the antithesis of all that is crepuscular and evil. It's not quite so lame, although that's the common understanding people generally establish from the scene having dozed off during the earlier exposition. Julian isn't averse to light per se, after all, he walks around in daylight throughout the movies without doing a Gizmo impersonation. It's light filtered via the prism of the runestones that intensifies the rays, making it deadly to witches.

Regardless, this is only half the strategy that leads to the demonic sorcerer meeting his maker (again). A sacred dagger forged from the Holy Grail is brought into play and following a tussle of telekinetic will, winds up stuck in Julian rather than either of the incapacitated kids (Kenny strapped to a tree, Samantha tied to the bumper of an SUV). Fighting its hallowed necromancy proves futile, their antagonist slumping into a green and black, bloody, pulsating gloop of decaying pulp and ossein once more. Stalked bulbous eyes popping, crawling with premature maggots, he looks like an unholy amalgam of a melting Gremlin and the wicked witch of the west.

"Warlock is a game with good control, decent challenge, nice animation and little else. The levels are some of the most repetitive in recent memory, graphics are passable but unspectacular and the music is downright annoying at times. To add insult to injury, the ending was basic, short and boring. Good movie though."

GameFan Magazine (69%, Mega Drive, May 1995)

In the game, we play as 'Hero', a single druid on a quest to acquire all the lost runestones before they fall into

warlockian mits. That was his proposed (placeholder?) name in the preview articles anyway. It may be Kenny, it's hard to tell, and is never spelt out for reasons that escape me. Very little inspiration is drawn from Armageddon aside from the bare bones of the runestone gimmick. Definitely no dwarves are squished to death in an iron maiden. I think I would have remembered that. Perhaps a businessman is warped into an avant-garde work of art. Happens to me all the time so it wouldn't have stuck out.



Even less of a homage to the first movie unless you count generic features of warlockism gleaned from folklore. Sadly,

Richard E. Grant and Lori Singer are nowhere to be seen - part of what made the first movie worth watching was the credible way the polar opposites gelled together despite the absurdity of their unaccustomed predicament.



A corresponding translation for the Atari Jaguar was in the works by Trimark Interactive, however, failed to materialise, leaving just the SEGA Mega Drive and SNES releases for us to explore. A number of key differences exist between the two, although plot and mechanics remain in alignment.



Opinion is split over which incarnation is considered the superior version, though most would agree it's a shame the Nintendo game was censored to eliminate any blood and gore.



Based - albeit very loosely - on an adult horror movie it seems entirely counter-intuitive to pretend no-one is getting hurt. Incidentally, it's still possible to shoot benign butterflies and the one dog that isn't mutated by Julian into a Cujo-like hellhound.



"Overall, I thought the game needed a little more evil. And though the Genesis version didn't look quite as good as the Super NES version, it was still an all-right game."

**Video Games & Computer Entertainment (70%,
Mega Drive, April 1995)**

Controls on both platforms could be more user-friendly it must be said. As a consequence of its cinematic aesthetic, our druid is fluidly animated, complete with wind-fluttering cape. Typically this would be a welcome bonus, except here it has the potential to hinder manoeuvrability since frame cycles must complete before subsequent joypad instructions are executed. Those split seconds lost can mean the difference between life and death. And, of course, the salvation of humanity as we know it! Gasp etc!



Being a druid, our main line of defence is magic; we're armed with seven varieties, carrying a maximum repository of 255 at a time. These include smart bombs of varying potency, healing and protection elixirs, a tremor attack, and time reversal trick.

In terms of projectiles, we can launch plasma bolts and glowing, radiant orbs, though only summon them whilst standing perfectly motionless. A bit of a drawback when a rapid reflex response is called for! Reminiscent of Highlander's electrical swirls, when activating magic spells, charged lightning envelopes and gyrates around our body as if gravitating towards the mystical nucleus of its levity.



Although plasma can only be projected horizontally and diagonally at a fixed trajectory, the orbs compensate for their shortcomings, offering a more flexible reach. If you can control the damn things - they seem to have a mind of their own. As with Kenny's baseball in the movie (more Jedi mind-tricks), orbs are telekinetically juggled before being hurled through the air at a target. That's the only occasion on which we see him interacting with anything that could vaguely be defined as an orb. Artistic license, you know how it goes. We needed weapons of some sort and they're severely lacking in the movie.

"At first I thought this game was too easy. The more I played it, I realized it was just too boring. Some of the characters take too long to die, or I should say, require too many hits. Get serious, you can grow old in the time it takes to kill some of these guys - next!!!"

Game Players (43%, SNES, April 1995)

In the game weapons also serve as a remote switch-flicker allowing us to activate lifts from areas that would otherwise

prohibit this. At least they do whenever the levers register shots. It's all extremely finicky and unpredictable as with use of the orbs as a weapon. No attempt whatsoever is made to disguise the correlation between Kenny's Jedi-esque training as a fledgeling Padawan and Luke Skywalker's in Star Wars. Even elements of John Williams' poignant soundtrack is clearly evoked to conjure the right mood. It's hard to tell if the producers were aiming for commemorative parody or plagiarism.

Julian needs no training as he arrives fully equipped for Superman-style flight. All that's required to maintain this ability is drinking the boiled flesh of an unbaptised child! Luckily we don't have to witness the logistics of this onscreen, although depicting the grim concept was originally proposed. Let's go fly a kite, up to the highest height...

Little Boy: You tellin' me you're a witch? You ain't no witch! Witches are girls!

Warlock: Some are men.

Little Boy: Yeah? So where's your broomstick?



Giles Redferne: Of all ingredients used by a witch, the most coveted is human fat. If that fat is cut from an unbaptised male child, there is but one purpose - one thing it will beget.

Kassandra: I'm listening.

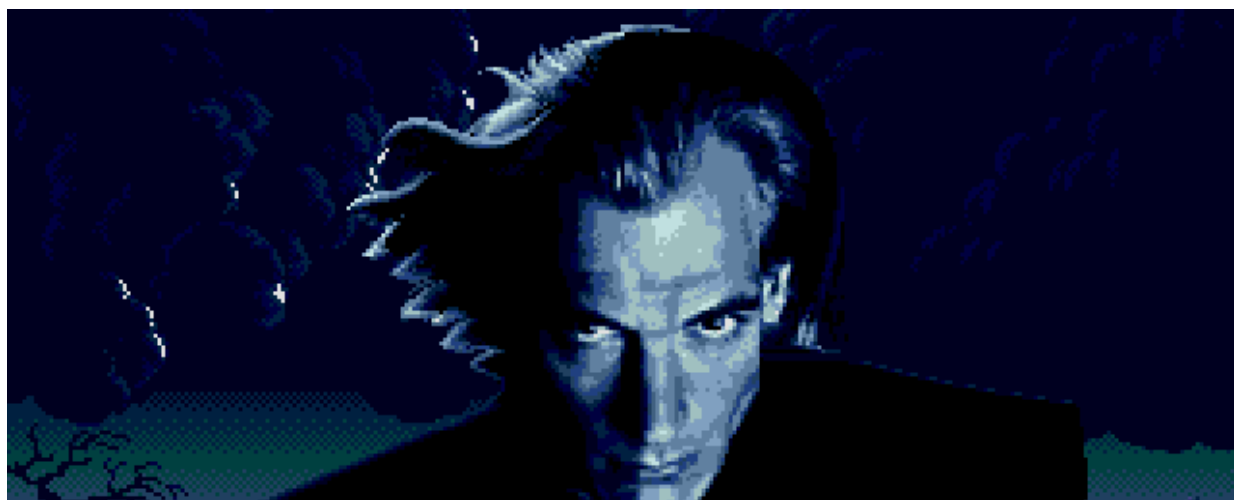
Giles Redferne: Flying potion.

This plot device entered common parlance when news of a copycat incident hit the headlines in 1995. Saskatchewan teenager, Sandy Charles, with an accomplice, murdered a 7-year-old boy inspired by Julian's flight juice 'advice'. He was subsequently tried and sentenced on the grounds of insanity, ever since incarcerated in the high-security Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon.

Flying is largely Julian's dominion, both in the movies and game. Excluding the Superman cheat, the closest we come to joining him is bouncing on hover crystals to reach inaccessible areas. These confer limited elevation if not extended by hopping between multiple crystals positioned in close proximity. We'd be flummoxed without them given that some switches are stowed out of reach and these are essential for disabling forcefields or unlocking subsequent territory.

Giles Redferne: My boots work best with ground beneath them - DIRECTLY beneath.

Enemies are plentiful and relentless so it's often best to simply hold onto your fedora and run for dear life seeing as spares are in short supply - only a single one from the outset with no continues. Die and we're treated to a full-screen animation of Julian Sands in all his lightning-illuminated, wind-ruffled, nefarious glory. That's so mesmerising you may not mind having to be six feet under to imbibe it.



Rolling head over heels through tight passageways is one course of evasive action we'll soon become accustomed to as we flee from one supernatural onslaught to the next. It's a tough slog even when cheating, unless you go so far as

disabling collision detection entirely. And then what's the point of playing at all?

Reaching the next level alive - in the absence of restart waypoints - may be enough to see you through given that passwords allow us to resume from the beginning of each stage. Not an option, rather a 'preparation' (see title screen menu).

All we can guarantee is that as our health dwindles, the horrific deterioration will be reflected on the face of our avatar in the HUD. Molten flesh rapidly slipping away from our battle-scarred skull until we look like the mirror image of Julian post-Warlock 1 'epic' battle.

Warlock: When I look at a fool, I see a mirror... But when I look in a mirror, I see a fool!



Opponents encountered are strangely out of sync with our current time period and environment; the warlock must have

transported the lot, lock, stock and barrel to the 20th century.



These include fire-breathing dragons, gargantuan spiders, animated statues, bats, wolves, flying gargoyles, Robin Hood wannabe archers, hollow-armoured knights, wraiths, mud monsters, Harryhausen style sword-wielding skeletons, zombies, a skeletal horse ridden by a former human armed with a mace, and Carrie-themed grave-protruding hands.



Ah, now there's something that *was* borrowed from the first movie; the last of the warlock's oil-black blood soaking into the graveyard, Lori and Giles assume it's time for a bit of R&R. Just then his hand thrusts upwards through the defiled burial ground, grabs the 'birth' runestone and vanishes just as swiftly as it emerged, as if to say, "I'll be back, stay tuned for the sequel". Blending He-Man with Terminator and Stephen King in one fell swoop!

Kassandra: (when they find Giles' coffin in 1989) At least you didn't have to open it. You didn't have to stare at your putrefied corpse or anything.

Meanwhile, in the game, we've still got work to do. Throughout, the warlock descends from the heavens to remotely unleash his puppet clan of loyal servants, orchestrating a torrent of physical abuse without so much as getting his hands grubby. Even the gnarled scenery is twisted into a malignant foe; you'll never walk nonchalantly past a thorny bush ever again.



True to form, whenever confronted directly, Julian has a nasty habit of transforming into a raging, fire-flinging demon. Defeat him and he transmogrifies into a vampiric bat, escaping cowardly to die another day. Evening up the odds, we can in due course counter the unhallowed beast by morphing into a sort of Blanca-like incredible hulk troll, identical to the appearance assumed by the wizard when attacking us or Julian. Now that's definitely something you won't see in any of the movies, unless someone swapped your Blu-ray with Streetfighter II.



Giles Redferne: Now, brute, one last time will we play the game out.



Prior to this, Warlock is largely traditional platforming fare, albeit striding for a level of attentive finesse lavished upon rivals such as Castlevania. Gameplay too takes its cues from more thoughtful examples of the genre; despite Redfearne's counsel to "tarry not", haste and brute force will rarely reap rewards, encouraging the player to adopt a more ponderous, delicate approach. That would explain why it takes even some expert longplayers an hour and a half to finish the baptism of fire ordeal.



*We must have made it out alive because the doom-and-gloom sky has melted away and the sun's shining again.
Hoorah!*

Giles Redferne: (admonishing Cassandra after stopping her crashing the car) Let your attention lie before you, not beside you.

Kassandra: Check this! Some guy from the seventeenth century telling ME how to drive. How quick they learn!

All's well that ends well, yet a niggle remains; something's missing. Road-tripping features quite prominently in both movies so it might have been interesting to mould that aspect into a level or two embodying a different genre.

Giles Redferne: (sternly) Lest you favor throttlings to the ears and face, bear west here.

Cabbie: (to himself) They wonder why we hate the Lakers.

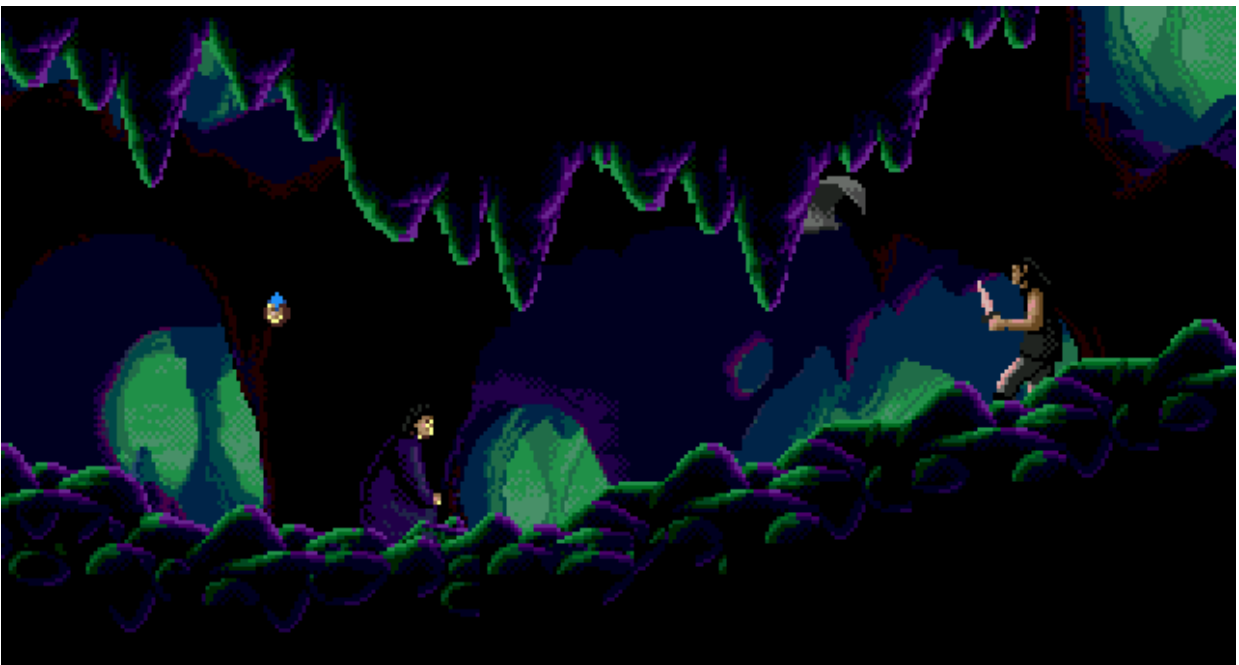


I'd drop the US-centric references to sports that no-one in the rest of the world gives a damn about though. That happens on a few occasions.

Puzzles are minimal and undemanding, mostly revolving around basic switch manipulation to control lifts and barriers.



More noteworthy are the visuals, particularly those found in the opening scene and caves, and any geared towards enhancing depth perception effects. Anti-aliasing goes a long way towards alleviating the blockiness console gamers wouldn't appreciate.



Dangling mace swinging between foreground and background are one of many highlights. These are typically found in castle-based games, though it's not often you see

them constructed in pseudo 3D in a 2D platformer as they are here. They just shrink and grow while pivoting. It's not rocket science, nonetheless, looks really impressive.



"A crap-looking veneer hides a very challenging platformer. If you fancy something a little different give it a whirl. But, be warned, it can get frustrating..."

Mean Machines (72%, Mega Drive, April 1995)

Ominous, rapidly cycling weather effects serve to engender a sense of perturbation. A disturbance in the force if you will. Semi-opaque tendrils of predatory fire and immersive mist blankets further assure that nothing good can possibly come from hanging around.

"The SNES graphics are excellent and the sound is very moody. Oh yes, it's a right on game, to be sure."

Video Games & Computer Entertainment (70%, SNES, April 1995)

Music, whilst sufficiently eerie and foreboding, is no more memorable than the perfunctory plot. More so, Julian's maniacally jarring laugh piercing the phantasmal gloom whenever conspiring against us.

Fundamental box-ticking notwithstanding, it's hard to argue that failing to fully grasp the source material is a missed opportunity given that so many people play the game with no awareness whatever of its roots. Plenty of others ignore the connection entirely with no interest in seeing or revisiting the movies they endured three decades ago.

Replace the protagonist and antagonist (who *does* actually look like Julian) with anything else and the game holds up or falls down equally well. Which begs the question I began with, why bother securing the rights to convert the franchise at all? I can only imagine it was a decision made by corporate bigwigs who don't watch movies or play games and saw it as a cheap cash-grab.

Warlock won't satisfy fans of the movie or games in general. Dissociation with the source material aside, the controls are painfully awkward, weapons weak and unreliable, puzzles a repetitive chore, and the difficulty curve unfairly skewed against the player. And yet the volume of footage, reviews and let's plays uploaded to YouTube is staggering. Love it or hate it, would-be druids can't help sticking it to the witch!